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Wisconsin says: We will win this fight!

By John Bachtell



We will win! We will win!" That was the chant of an exuberant crowd of over 150,000 from across the state and region that rocked the capitol grounds March 12. It was their answer to a bill ramrodded through the Republican controlled state legislature and signed by Gov. Scott Walker last week stripping public workers of collective bargaining rights.

Despite the legislative setback, there was no sign of defeat on this frigid "spring Wisconsin day." The mood was buoyant as the crowd celebrated the massive movement built in three weeks, the strength of solidarity stretching worldwide and confidence in ultimate victory restoring union rights and taking back Wisconsin state government from the extremist right wing and its corporate backers.

"We're here to make our voices heard. We're here to move on to recall (Republican state senators and Gov. Walker) and build coalitions with others harmed by (Walker's) budget. We're talking about democracy and fairness in the economy," remarked Phil Neuenfeldt, president of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO.

"Look around, we're winning. One battle does not make a war," he said.

The day began with a tractorcade from the

Wisconsin Farmers Union and Family Farm Defenders (FFD) that encircled the capitol. Small farmers and their families drove in from every corner of the state.

John Peck, director of FFD, told the Cap Times many of who came to Madison are upset by the realization that Walker's agenda is "sacrificing Wisconsin's quality of life for everyone, not just unions."

"If Badger Care (state health care system) is wiped out or scaled back, a lot of these people

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won't have health care anymore," Peck says.

Speakers from Voces de la Frontera and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists attacked Walker and the Republicans for advancing an agenda aimed at polarizing the state racially, dismantling affirma-

It was said to be the largest political rally ever in Madison.

tive action and passing anti-immigrant legislation modeled after Arizona.

While a flood of marchers continued encircling the capitol, the crowd erupted at the afternoon rally when the Wisconsin “Fab 14” made a triumphant return. The Democratic state senators had been in Illinois for the past three weeks to prevent a vote on the measure.

Democratic Senate Minority Leader Mark Miller declared, “Our fight to protect union rights has become a fight to protect all rights.”

Shalhoub, an actor from the television show “Monk,” blasted the Republican attack on democracy in the state and the vilification of union workers. He introduced one of the union “hoodlums,” his sister Amy from Green Bay, a public school teacher and union member.

“The vast majority of Wisconsinites don’t support the agenda of soon to be former governor Walker,” said Shalhoub to cheers. “They want to unravel the very fabric of democracy. If they succeed, their endgame will make what they did this week look like a halftime show at an exhibition

game in Lambeau Field (home of the Super Bowl champion Packers),” he said.

The massive rally was seen “not as the end, but the beginning of “Phase II.” All focus is on the feverish recall efforts underway against 8 Republican state senators. The recall of only 3 and the election of Democrats will shift control of the State Senate into Democratic hands. By law, Walker will not be up for recall until he has served one year in office but plans are underway for that effort as well.

First though is the upcoming April 5 elections to elect a new supreme court justice, county and municipal elections. The Supreme Court contest is seen as the first test and pits a Walker backed candidate, right-wing sitting justice David Prosser against Assistant Attorney General JoAnne Kloppenburg, supported by the rapidly growing statewide people’s upsurge.



John Bachtell is a writer for the People’s World.

The people of Japan are in our hearts

By PW Editorial Board

We extend our deepest sympathy and solidarity to the people of Japan in the unfathomable tragedy that has been unfolding since the March 11 earthquake and tsunami hit.

Entire towns and villages have been wiped out, swept into the sea. The death toll is now estimated at 10,000 and is expected to go much higher in the areas around Sendai, close to the earthquake’s epicenter. Hundreds of thousands are homeless or without electricity, heat or water. Radioactive material from damaged nuclear power plants has been released into the atmosphere.

Truly, the workers in those plants are heroes, exposing themselves to deadly radiation as they try to prevent a wider nuclear disaster. Already a number of workers have been diagnosed with radiation sickness.

Japan had seawalls in place to protect coastal areas. Yet those seawalls were no match for the giant waves that rolled across.

Here in the U.S., experts say our wealthy and technologically advanced country is poorly prepared for such natural disasters. Right-wing corporate elements are fighting tooth and nail against environmental protection measures and against spending on science and public infrastructure. And nuclear power plants dot some of the most earthquake-prone parts of our country.

As we watch and read of the tragedy unfolding in Japan our hearts are heavy. As Americans, whose government dropped the atom bomb on Japanese civilians in 1945, we feel a special responsibility to express our solidarity with the people of Japan today, and to look for ways to extend material aid as well.

We also think about the wider implications of this tragedy.

It raises deep questions about humanity’s relationship with the planet we live on. Do we put people and nature before profits? It’s up to us, the people, to decide.

The workers in those plants are heroes, exposing themselves to deadly radiation as they try to prevent a wider nuclear disaster.

Immigrant youth: Undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic

By Pepe Lozano

I was only one year old when I was brought to this country. All of my memories were made here. Memories like watching my mother run from one job to the other, but no matter how hard she worked we never seemed to get the good life we came here for. My name is Osbaldo. I'm undocumented and I'm not sorry for being here."

Osbaldo, a high school senior, said he constantly asks himself what he will do after graduating. "I want to go to college, but then I think about how long it will take me to graduate if I have to work so much in order to afford it, or if I'll even be able to get a job," he said. "This is my home, this is where I belong, and where I want to build a life that I deserve, that everyone deserves."

He was one of several immigrant youth that publicly proclaimed his undocumented status during a March 10th downtown rally here as part of a "National Coming Out of the Shadows" action. Despite the risk, the high school and college students told their stories among a crowd of hundreds of young immigrant rights activists. Each told how they came to the U.S. as children and what life was like growing up here with an "undocumented" status. Now they are faced with limited education and career opportunities.

One student, who gave her name as Lulu, said, "18 years ago my parents immigrated to this country. They left their family and the lives they built in Mexico. They took a leap of faith in hopes of raising their children in a land of opportunity."

She said she was one of 20 other undocumented students that staged a civil disobedience last year that resulted in arrest and possible de-



portation. The night before, she said, she had a conversation with her family and struggled to convince them not to worry.

"But I knew there was a chance I would not be coming home," Lulu said. "I knew that the risk I was taking might determine the next 10 years of my life in an unfamiliar country." Above all, she said her decision to act and the sacrifices her parents made for her were all worth it, and that she believes in a future free from fear.

The Chicago-based Immigrant Youth Justice League, a group of undocumented youth who advocate for immigrant rights through education, coalition building and youth organizing, planned the rally.

Rigo Padilla, a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago said the message was to encourage immigrant youth to come out of the shadows.

"We have to be unapologetic about our parents who brought us here," he said. "As a matter of fact we are extremely thankful that they did."

The rally was one of the first public actions since Congress failed to pass the DREAM Act last December.

The message was to encourage immigrant youth to come out of the shadows.

Floridians to gov: You've got a fight on your hands

By Dan Margolis

Rick Scott, Florida's tea-party-backed Republican governor, thought he'd have an easy time pushing through his agenda. After all, he won election last fall at the same time voters voted into power what he bragged was the most conservative legislature this state has seen since the Civil War.

But Tuesday, the first day of the new legislative session, saw "Awake the State" demonstrations in 32 cities across the state, aiming to do one thing: stop Gov. Scott's proposed "skeleton budget."

Scott's \$65 billion budget includes a nearly \$5 billion cut in education, and \$3 billion cut from Medicaid over the next two years. It proposes to lay off 8,600 state workers - 7.3 percent of the workforce - and cut benefits for those remaining.

"This would be the biggest cut in education in the history of the state of Florida - not for the last decade, not in the last decade, but ever," said the emcee of the rally in Miami, where several hundred people took their lunch hour to protest outside the Miami-Dade government offices.

The 32 anti-Scott "Awake the State" rallies dwarfed the single pro-Scott rally of about 500 in Tallahassee, the capital. While the Awake rallies were organized by state and local grassroots organizations, the pro-Scott demonstrators had a helpful ally - or puppeteer: Americans for Prosperity, bankrolled by the notorious billionaire Koch brothers. The fake grassroots AFP front poured money into the pro-Scott rally, including for the costs of 14 buses and vans that brought the 500 tea party activists from around the state.

Para salvar a los niños: Más impuestos a los ricos

Por Jarvis Tyner

Casi el 25 por ciento de los niños norteamericanos ya vive en pobreza: el mayor porcentaje desde tiempos de la Gran Depresión. Desde que comenzó la crisis económica actual la pobreza infantil ha crecido en dos millones, a algunos 16 millones de niños y jóvenes por toda la nación.

Según el reporte de 2010 del Fondo de Defensa a los Niños, "Los niños norteamericanos quedan atrás de casi todos las demás naciones industrializadas en los indicadores más claves. EEUU tiene la vergüenza de estar el peor entre las naciones industrializadas en pobreza infantil relativa, en la brecha entre ricos y pobres, en el número de niños nacidos a jovencitas no casadas, y en la violencia juvenil con armas de fuego".

Recientemente, la red de televisión CBS transmitió un segmento sobre la pobreza infantil que servía como poderoso recordatorio de que cada día millones de niños norteamericanos se enfrentan a las duras realidades del hambre y del estar sin techo.

En ese segmento, se sentaban los reporteros con un grupo de niños morenos, blancos y de bronce, pidiéndoles sus historias. Y los niños les contaban sus experiencias de cómo es ser pobre.

Muchos hasta comenzaban a llorar cuando contaban que tenían que pedirles a sus compañeritos los restos de sus lonches en la escuela. Contaba uno la vergüenza de tener que vivir en el carro familiar, y hablaba otros de recurrir a la caridad de una iglesia.

Como subrayaba el programa,

esta situación existe en gran parte como consecuencia del hecho de que más de un millón de gente que ha perdido sus domicilios durante los últimos 12 meses. Este año, por lo menos otro millón de casas sufrirán ejecuciones hipotecarias.

Sin embargo, el racismo y la pobreza van entrelazados.

Tristemente, en vez de dirigirse directamente a estos problemas, la ultraderecha ha cambiado de tema. Ahora todo lo que discuten es lo de déficits y recortes de impuestos, cuando la cuestión real sigue siendo la de trabajos y el bienestar de las familias y de los niños.

Estos problemas tienen sus raíces en la explotación de la clase trabajadora.

Y todo esto se ha agravado por los 30 años de dominancia de políticas antitrabajadores de ultraderecha, políticas que han causado la crisis económica actual.

Quedan más pobres las familias trabajadoras porque la riqueza creada por su labor ha sido expropiada por los más ricos de los ricos.

Niveles record de ganancias y niveles record de pobreza van mano en mano.

La salida a la crisis es dejar de echarles la culpa a las víctimas y hacer pagar a los ricos culpables.

No hacerlo es irresponsable e in-moral. Ha llegado la hora de cobrarles sus impuestos.

Hay que cobrarles ya para salvar a los niños.

Hay que cobrarles hasta que duela.

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